

The Prodigal

"The Lost Older Brother" – Luke 15

August 31, 2014

Our Sermon Series

The Prodigal <i>A Study of Jesus' Most Famous Story</i>		
Date	Message Title	Bible Text
Aug. 24	The Lost Younger Son	Luke 15
Aug. 31	The Lost Older Brother	Luke 15
Sept. 7	The Prodigal God	Luke 15
Sept. 14	Becoming More Like the Father	Luke 15
Sept. 21	The Prodigal Story as the Story of the Bible	Luke 15
Sept. 28	Heaven: The Father Throws a Party	Luke 15

Do I Really Understand the Gospel?

- The Prodigal parable has always evoked for me a pity for the older brother who worked so hard and yet had no party thrown for him. This does not seem right or fair.
- I'm discovering that this reveals my lack of understanding of the Gospel.
- Tim Keller: "What Jesus says about the older brother is one of the most important messages given to us in the Bible."
- The message of this parable is that both the younger son and the older son were lost and distant from the father and needed a Savior to bring them home.
- The Prodigal is not just a feel good story about the return of the younger son, but it is a shocking confrontation of our false views of the Gospel.

Younger Son	Older Son
Sinners and tax collectors	Pharisees and scribes
Everyone knows they need saving	No one thinks they need saving
Alcoholic	Spouse of alcoholic
Unchurched	Churched
Mozart	Salieri
Bad child	Good child
Liberals	Conservatives
Democrats	Republicans
CNN	Fox News
Homosexuals	Heterosexuals

Nine Observations about the Older Brother (Luke 15)

1. The older brother represents the **Pharisees** and scribes who were angry that Jesus was hanging out with sinners (vv.1-2)
2. The older brother is **angry** and refuses to go into the father's house (v.28)
 - The party in the house represents the Kingdom of God which is repeatedly pictured as a party celebration (Matthew 22:2; 25:10; Revelation 19:7-9).
 - The older brother refuses to enter the Kingdom of God.
3. The older brother's actions are an insult to the father (v.28)
 - Tim Keller: "The elder brother remains outside the door, publicly casting a vote of no-confidence in his father's actions. This forces the father to come out to speak to his older son, a demeaning thing to have to do when you are the lord of the manor and host of a great feast."
 - The older brother is distant from his father relationally even though he had been "doing all the right things."
4. The father comes out to the older brother (v.28)
 - The father loves his older son just as much as his younger son. He comes out to the older brother just like he came out to the younger son. He loves them both.
5. The father **entreats** the elder son to come in to his Kingdom celebration (v.28)
 - "entreats" (*paracleo*) – This is the same word used to describe Jairus longingly pleading with Jesus to come and heal his daughter (Luke 8:41).
 - John Piper: "The most moving words of tenderness for Pharisees (are) the words of the father to the elder brother. The message of the parable ends with tenderness to both brothers: Come in from the foreign country of misery, and come in from the front porch of hard-earned merit. Both are dead. But inside is the banquet of grace and forgiveness and fellowship with an all-satisfying Father."
6. The older brother **disrespects** his father by not addressing him as "Father," but rather saying "Look!" (v.29)
 - Contrast this with v.21 and v.31
 - The elder son's true colors are being revealed. He does not care about his relationship with his father. He cares about stuff and rewards.

7. The older brother is not living in his **sonship** (vv.29-30)

- Servant versus son

<i>False View</i>	<i>Correct View</i>
"I have served you all these years..."	True identity = son not slave
"You have not given me even a goat..."	Truth = all the father has belongs to him as his son
Brother is consumed with rewards and stuff	The father cares about relationship

- In a major twist of irony, the younger son comes home willing to be a servant and receives son-ship while the older brother has been home the whole time acting like a servant rather than a son.

8. The older son is estranged from his younger brother and thus is estranged from the father (v.30)

- He calls his brother "this son of yours" (v.30). He will not claim him as his brother. He is estranged from him.
- To be estranged from the brother is to be estranged from the father. The father plans to be in the house. The older son must come into the house (where the younger son is) in order to be with the father.
- The father entreats the older son to come back into fellowship with his younger brother: "this brother of yours" (v.32).
- In the Kingdom of God, in order to fellowship with the Father, we must fellowship with His children.
- **1 John 1:7** – *But if we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another....*
- The Bible is super clear that to not forgive a brother or sister is to be out of fellowship with the Father.
- **Matthew 6:14-15** – *For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.*

9. The story ends unresolved (v.32)

- Jesus does not tell us now the story ends, I believe, because the story is an invitation. The story's ending depends on our response. Will we enter the Father's party? Or will we stay angry and bitter outside?
- This story would have insulted the Pharisees because it leaves them outside the Kingdom while the sinners and tax collectors are inside the Kingdom.
- However, the ending truly is a loving invitation to the Pharisees to repent of their pride and come into the Kingdom party!!

Four Applications for My Life

1. Receive the **true Gospel**

- This begins with recognizing that sin is deeper than breaking rules. Sin is rebellion against God whether disobedience in breaking God's laws (younger brother) or pride in moral conformity (older brother). Sin is putting yourself in the place of God whether through disobedience or pride. Sin is separation from God whether by traveling to an immoral "far country" or by arrogantly serving on the church's front porch.
- Receiving the true Gospel means I bring nothing to the table. I have nothing to offer to save myself.
- Rock of Ages: "Nothing in my hand I bring, simply to the cross I cling."
- **Ephesians 2:8-9** – *For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith – and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God – not by works, so that no one can boast.*
- **Galatians 6:14** – *May I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.*
- John Piper: "Faith is unique among all the acts of the soul. It is the weakest and most helpless and most empty-handed. It is all dependence on Another. In a sense, it is an acted non-act – an act that is entirely receiving. It is a doing, whose doing is the will to let Another do all the doing. Since it is empty-handed, it is not like a virtue. It looks to the virtue of another. It looks to the strength of another. It looks to the wisdom of another. It is entirely other-directed and other-dependent. Therefore, it can't boast in itself."

2. Walk in **sonship** not slavery

- Receive and enjoy the robe of righteousness, the signature ring of God's Spirit, the shoes of family identity, and the Kingdom party.
- Live like a son not a slave. Sons enjoy relationship with their Father.
- **Romans 8:15-16** – *For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship. And by Him we cry, "Abba, Father." The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children.*

3. **Forgive** the "younger brother"

- Lord, I forgive... for doing....

4. Only do things that you can do without **resentment**

- Karpman Drama Triangle: We do something to serve someone else. Later, we get mad at them because either we didn't want to serve them in the first place or because they did not respond the way we wanted them to. We feel used and sorry for ourselves. The triangle pattern is: rescuer, persecutor, victim. This is unhealthy.
- Only do things for others that you can do without resentment.